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NO.15
OCT-NOV

THE VAULT OF




REPRINT
EDITION

HORROR[®]



JOHN
CRAIG

THE VAULT OF HORROR!



WELCOME, READERS... WELCOME TO THE VAULT OF HORROR! THIS TIME I HAVE A TALE FOR YOU THAT EVEN PUZZLES ME! STRETCH OUT COMFORTABLY, NOW... AND COVER YOURSELVES WITH DEEP BLACK DIRT TO KEEP WARM! I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO CATCH COLD FROM THIS CHILLER I CALL

HORROR HOUSE!



J. H. CRAIG

NOW LISTEN, HENRY! EITHER YOU GET YOUR STORIES IN ON TIME OR YOU LOOK FOR ANOTHER PUBLISHER! THIS BUSINESS OF BEING LATE HAS GOT TO STOP!

OKAY, BOSS! OKAY, YOU'RE RIGHT! BUT IT'S NOT MY FAULT! FRIENDS ARE ALWAYS BARGING IN ON ME... THROWING PARTIES... IN MY APARTMENT! I CAN'T GET RID OF THEM!

WELL, EITHER YOU GET RID OF THEM...OR I'LL GET RID OF YOU!

OKAY, BOSS! I PROMISE. I WON'T BE LATE AGAIN. I'LL OUTWIT THEM... SOMEHOW!

EDITOR

NORROR
GOREY MYSTERY

AT HOME AGAIN, HENRY DAVIDSON SITS AT HIS TYPEWRITER...

I HAVE A TERRIFIC PLOT FOR THIS NEXT HORROR STORY! IF ONLY I'M NOT INTERRUPTED—
HANG IT ALL! THERE'S THE DOORBELL!



HIYA, HENRY, OLD BOY! THOUGHT I'D BRING THE GANG OVER! HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN A COUPLE OF DAYS!

OH, NO!

DON'T LET US *BOTHER* YOU, HENRY, IF YOU'RE *BUSY!* YOU GO RIGHT AHEAD AND WORK, DAHLING!



HEY! WHERE'S YOUR LIQUOR, HENRY?

OH, I BET YOU SAY THAT TO ALL THE GIRLS...

THROW BACK THE RUG! I FEEL LIKE DANCING!

HENRY! YOU OLD MEANY! WHY HAVEN'T I SEEN MORE OF YOU?

LOOK, HENRY! I GOT A *TERRIFIC* STORY FOR YOU! THERE'S THIS GUY, SEE...

WELL, THAT DOES IT! I CAN'T TAKE ANYMORE OF *THIS!* IF THEY LIKE MY APARTMENT SO MUCH, THEY CAN HAVE IT! I'LL JUST PACK UP MY CLOTHES AND TYPEWRITER...AND *LEAVE!*



LEAVING SO SOON, FELLAH? CAN'T SAY I BLAME YOU! THE GUY WHO LIVES HERE SURE IS STINGY WITH HIS DRINKS!



SOME HOURS LATER...

I SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS LONG AGO! I'LL FIND SOME QUIET PLACE HERE IN THE COUNTRY WHERE I WON'T BE DISTURBED AND...HEY...



THAT HOUSE! IT'S *PERFECT!* JUST WHAT I NEED! WHY, I BET I COULD WRITE *SENSATIONAL* HORROR STORIES WITH ALL THAT MOOD AND ATMOSPHERE! I'LL *BUY IT!*



LATER, AT A REAL ESTATE AGENT'S OFFICE IN TOWN.

YOU... YOU WANT TO BUY **MILLFORD MANOR**? BUT... **NOBODY** WANTS TO BUY **THAT HOUSE**! IT'S... IT'S **HAUNTED**!



HAUNTED? HA! HA! WHAT NONSENSE! THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS HOUSES REALLY BEING **HAUNTED**! I'LL BUY IT RIGHT NOW!

...AND AT THE GENERAL STORE WHILE BUYING FOOD...

MILLFORD MANOR? GLORY BE, STRANGER! ARE YE **DAFT**? DON'T YE KNOW THAT PLACE IS **HAUNTED**?



DON'T TELL ME YOU BELIEVE THOSE OLD WIVES' TALES. HA! HA! WELL, I MAY **WRITE** GHOST AND HORROR STORIES, BUT I DON'T HAVE TO **BELIEVE 'EM**!

AH... I'M ALL SET! PLENTY OF FOOD, TYPE-WRITER RIBBON, PAPER... THIS IS GOING TO BE **GREAT**! I CAN'T WAIT TO BEGIN WRITING!



BY CANDLELIGHT, HENRY WORKS ON HIS LATEST STORY. HARDLY DOES HE TAKE TIME OUT TO EAT AND SLEEP, SO ENTHUSED IS HE...! THE DAYS PASS....



FINISHED! AND IN RECORD TIME, TOO! AH! I **KNEW** THIS PLACE WAS PERFECT FOR ME, THE MINUTE I SAW IT!

THIS IS THE BEST STORY I'VE EVER WRITTEN! BOY! WON'T MY BOSS BE SURPRISED? WHA... SOMEONE AT THE DOOR...



HIYA, HENRY, OLD BOY!

THOUGHT YOU'D LOSE US BY HIBERNATING, EH?

YOU NAUGHTY BOY! HOW COULD YOU DESERT US LIKE THAT? YOU MUST COME BACK TO THE CITY, HENRY! YOU SIMPLY **MUST**!



RETURN TO THE CITY? NOT ON YOUR LIFE! I'VE FOUND A HOME HERE, AND **HERE I STAY**!

BUT... BUT HOW CAN ANYONE **LIVE** IN A GLOOMY OLD PLACE LIKE THIS? IT'S... IT'S **AWFUL**!





NONETHELESS, HERE I STAY! I'M DRIVING TO THE CITY TO DELIVER A MANUSCRIPT. ANYONE CARE FOR A LIFT?

ER...NO, THANKS, HENRY! WE'LL LOOK AROUND FOR AWHILE! SURE! WE'LL SEE YOU WHEN YOU GET BACK!



HE'S GONE!

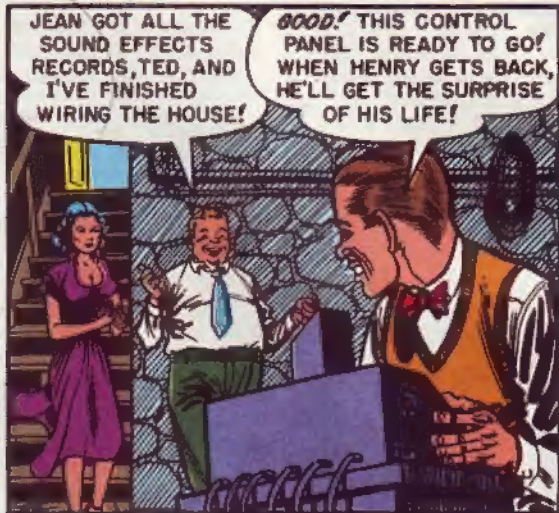
BOY! HAVE I AN IDEA! I KNOW HOW WE CAN GET HENRY BACK TO THE CITY FOR \$1000! NOW, LISTEN! HERE'S WHAT WE DO...



A FEW HOURS LATER...

IT WAS A JOB TRYING TO GET THESE SOUND-EFFECTS RECORDS, AND THIS PHONOGRAPH, BUT I GOT THEM!

SWELL! I'VE HIDDEN LOUDSPEAKERS IN EVERY ROOM, NOOK AND CRANNY IN THIS DUMP! TED'S DOWN THE CELLAR SETTING UP A CONTROL PANEL HE GOT HOLD OF!



JEAN GOT ALL THE SOUND EFFECTS RECORDS, TED, AND I'VE FINISHED WIRING THE HOUSE!

GOOD! THIS CONTROL PANEL IS READY TO GO! WHEN HENRY GETS BACK, HE'LL GET THE SURPRISE OF HIS LIFE!

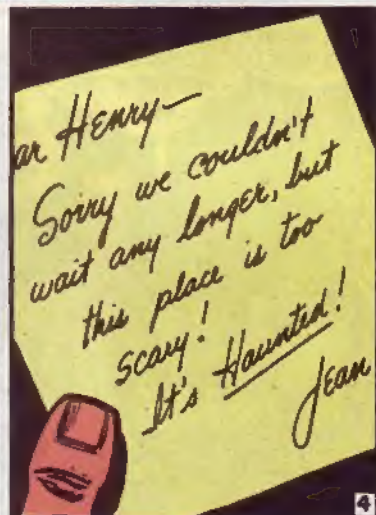


SURE! HA HA! WE'LL GIVE HIM SUCH A SCARE, HE'LL NEVER WANT TO SEE THIS PLACE AGAIN! HA! HA! HA!

SHH! I HEAR HIS CAR PULLING UP IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE!



HELLO! TED? JEAN? ANYBODY HERE? HMM...GUESS THEY'RE WHAT'S THAT OVER THERE? A NOTE BY MY TYPEWRITER...



HA! HA! HA! HA!

OH, THIS IS *RICH*! I'VE
FINALLY GOTTEN RID OF
THEM! THEY'LL NEVER
BOTHER ME ANYMORE! **HA!**
HA! THIS HOUSE... **HA! HA!**
HAUNTED! WHAT A LAUGH!

OKAY, JEAN... HE MUST HAVE READ
THE NOTE BY NOW! SCREAM RIGHT
INTO THE MIKE...
LOUD AND *SOARY*!

EEE-EEE-EEK-KK!

MY GOSH! A
SCREAM! SOUNDS
LIKE IT CAME
FROM UPSTAIRS!

THERE'S NOBODY...
NOBODY HERE!
HEH... MUST BE MY...
IMAGINATION!

THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP

IMAGINATION? I HEAR *FOOT-
STEPS!* COMING UP THE STAIRS!
COMING TOWARD ME!

THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUN

I... I CAN HEAR THE STEPS! SOMEONE... SOMETHING
IS COMING UP THE STAIRS! I CAN *HEAR* IT... BUT
I CAN'T SEE IT!

STOP! GO AWAY!
STAY AWAY
FROM ME!

HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
I'LL BET HE'S SCARED
STIFF! GET THAT
RATTLING CHAINS
RECORD READY!

WHA...WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
CHAINS RATTLING ALL AROUND
ME! MOANS...SHRIEKING! I'M...
I'M GOING CRAZY! THIS PLACE
IS HAUNTED!



...GOT TO KEEP CALM! LOOK
IN EVERY ROOM! THOSE...
THOSE SOUNDS! WHERE ARE
THEY COMING FROM?



SEARCHED EVERY ROOM...ALL
EMPTY! YET THOSE WEIRD
NOISES...ALL AROUND ME! THE
CELLAR...I HAVEN'T SEARCHED
THE CELLAR!



YAAAAAGGHH!



HELP! GHOSTS! SPOOKS!
THE HOUSE IS HAUNTED!
HELP!



HA! HA! HA! HA!
TED, YOU WERE A
RIOT IN THAT SHEET!
YOU SHOULD HAVE
SEEN HIS FACE!

HE TORE
OUT OF
HERE...
SO
FAST!
HA! HA! HA!

T...TED...
TED, LOOK!
LOOK!



WHA...WHAT IS IT? IT'S COMING TOWARD US!
NO! NO! STOP! KEEP BACK! STAY AWAY!



A FEW HOURS LATER, HENRY RETURNS...WITH THE CONSTABLE AND HIS DEPUTIES...

CONFOUND IT! EVERYONE TOLD YOU THE PLACE WAS HAUNTED!

OKAY! OKAY! JUST HELP ME GET MY TYPEWRITER AND CLOTHES! I'LL GO AND...SAY! WHAT'S THAT IN THE DRIVEWAY?



GOOD LORD! IT'S A MAN! BUT... HIS FACE! LOOK AT HIS FACE!

IT...IT HAS NO... NO FLESH! LIKE SOMETHING HAS EATEN...

CONSTABLE! COME INSIDE! QUICK!



WE FOUND HIM...JUST LIKE THAT!

TED! IT'S TED! THE ONE OUTSIDE MUST BE ROGER! BUT WHERE'S JEAN?



LISTEN! SOMEONE LAUGHING! SOUNDS HYSTERICAL!

...COMING FROM THE CELLAR! O'MON!



JEAN!

GREAT SCOTT! SHE'S AGED TWENTY YEARS! SHE MUST HAVE SEEN SOMETHING HORRIBLE BEYOND WORDS TO MAKE HER THE BABBLING LUNATIC WE SEE!



HMPF! CONTROL PANEL...SOUND EFFECTS RECORDS! THEY TRIED TO SCARE ME INTO RETURNING TO THE CITY!

...ONLY THEIR LITTLE PLAN BACKFIRED! JUST WHAT DID HAPPEN, WE'LL PROBABLY NEVER KNOW!



HENRY RETURNS TO THE CITY WHERE THE GANG STILL WHOOP IT UP! ONLY NOW HENRY ENJOYS IT...HE DOESN'T LIKE BEING ALONE ANYMORE!



HEH, HEH, HEH! WELL, READERS, DID YOU LIKE MY AMUSING LITTLE TALE? I HOPE SO! TO THIS DAY NO ONE KNOWS WHAT EVIL IS POSSESSED BY THAT HORROR HOUSE! HEH! BUT IF YOU WANT ANOTHER STORY... HEH! JUST READ ON!



THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

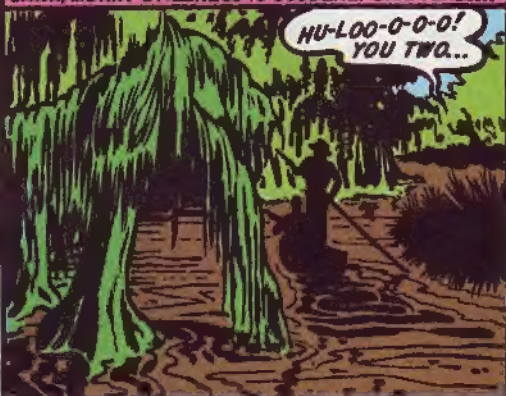


ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF! I AM THE OLD WITCH! WHEN THE VAULT-KEEPER ASKED ME TO BREW UP A SPINE-TINGLING YARN IN MY CAULDRON AND PRESENT IT TO YOU IN HIS MAGAZINE, I COULDN'T REFUSE! (I AM HIS GHOUL-FRIEND, YOU KNOW!) THIS STORY IS ONE OF MY VERY BEST! I CALL IT...

TERROR IN THE SWAMP!



AS THE TWO MEN IN THE FLATBOTTOM BOAT GLIDE SLOWLY UPSTREAM, DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE HEART OF THE DREADED OKEFENOKEE SWAMP...THE DANK, MURKY STILLNESS IS SUDDENLY SHATTERED...



HU-LOO-O-O-O!
YOU TWO...

LOOK, SAM! THAT OLD GUY ON THE BANK IS WAVING TO US...

COME ASHORE! DON'T GO ON ANY FURTHER! I BEG YOU...





LET'S GO OVER AND SEE WHAT HE'S RAVING ABOUT! HE LOOKS TERRIFIED!

OKAY, SAM!

PLEASE! DON'T GO PAST THIS SPOT... PLEASE! PLEASE!



WHAT'S THE TROUBLE, OLD MAN?

YOU MUSTN'T GO ON INTO THE SWAMP! YOU'LL NEVER COME OUT ALIVE IF YOU DO!



LOOK, STRANGER! WE'VE HEARD ALL ABOUT THIS SWAMP! ALL ABOUT PEOPLE WHO GO INTO IT AND ARE NEVER SEEN AGAIN!

...BUT WE THINK IT'S ALL NONSENSE! I'VE MAPPED OUR TRIP SO FAR! IT'LL BE A SIMPLE MATTER TO RETRACE OUR STEPS...



NONSENSE, EH? GENTLEMEN! I **WARN** YOU! THE LEGEND OF THE OKEFENOKEE IS **REAL!** I **KNOW!** YOU'LL NEVER COME OUT ALIVE...UNLESS YOU LET **ME** GUIDE YOU!



OH, I GET IT NOW! LOOKIN' FOR A FAST BUCK... THAT'S ALL!

NO! NO! YOU'RE **WRONG!** I'LL DO IT FOR **NOTHING!**



JUST WHAT *IS* IT IN THIS SWAMP THAT PEOPLE ARE SO AFRAID OF?

ONLY I KNOW WHAT IT **ACTUALLY** IS...



TELL US, OLD MAN! WHAT IS IT?

COME INTO MY SHACK...AND I'LL RELATE THE WHOLE STORY...

THE OLD MAN LEADS THE OTHER TWO INTO HIS CRUDE HUT? THEY SEAT THEMSELVES ON ROUGHLY HEWN CHAIRS? THEN THE OLD ONE BEGINS TO SPEAK...

ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, THREE PEOPLE CAME TO THIS PART OF THE OKEFENOKEE... THREE SCIENTISTS: ONE WAS MIDDLE-AGED, ONE WAS A YOUNG WOMAN, HIS DAUGHTER, AND THE THIRD... A YOUNG MAN... THE GIRL'S FIANCEE...



THEY HAD A DREAM, THESE THREE! THEY WERE GOING TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM THAT HAD BAFLED SCIENCE FOR CENTURIES! THEY WERE GOING TO SOLVE THE SECRET OF LIFE...!

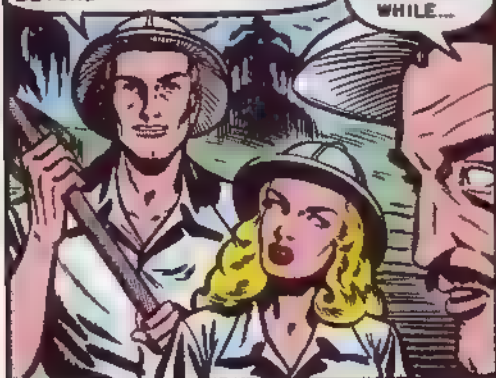
BUT, WHY THIS GOD-FORSAKEN PLACE, FATHER?

HERE, WE CAN WORK UNDISTURBED BY OUTSIDERS, MARIE! NO PUBLICITY... NO REPORTERS... NO PRYING EYES!



YES, MARIE! AFTER ALL, WE WOULD RECEIVE A GREAT DEAL OF CRITICISM! TO *CREATE* LIVING MATTER... TO *CREATE* LIFE... IS SOMETHING THAT IS CONSIDERED BEYOND THE REALM OF SCIENCE...

SO YOU SEE, MARIE, WE MUST SEPARATE OURSELVES FROM SOCIETY... AT LEAST FOR A WHILE...



AND SO, PROFESSOR CARL WARD, MARIE WARD AND ROBERT COLBY SET TO WORK, BUILDING A LABORATORY... HERE... HERE IN THE OKEFENOKEE...

AT LAST... WE ARE FINISHED!

NOW WE CAN UNPACK OUR EQUIPMENT... ALL OUR APPARATUS... AND BEGIN OUR WORK!



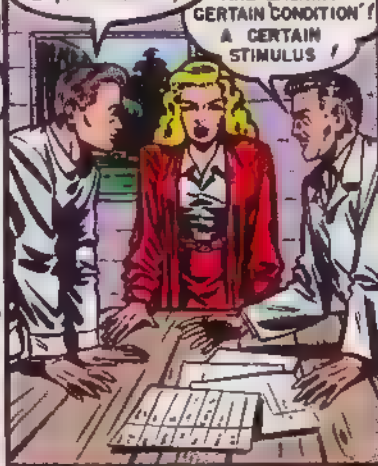
* THEIR EXPERIMENTING BEGAN... *

WE *KNOW* WHAT PROTOPLASM... LIVING TISSUE... CONTAINS! WE HAVE ANALYZED IT AND WE KNOW *EVERY* CHEMICAL... IN ITS *PROPER PROPORTION*! AND YET... WHEN WE PLACE THEM TOGETHER... COMBINE THEM... THEY DO NOT BEGIN TO... TO... *LIVE*! THERE IS ONE 'ELEMENT' MISSING...



THE SPARK OF LIFE, EH, PROFESSOR?

EXACTLY! WE ARE LACKING A CERTAIN 'CONDITION'! A CERTAIN STIMULUS!

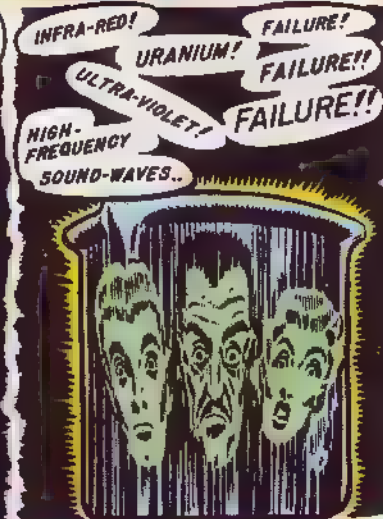
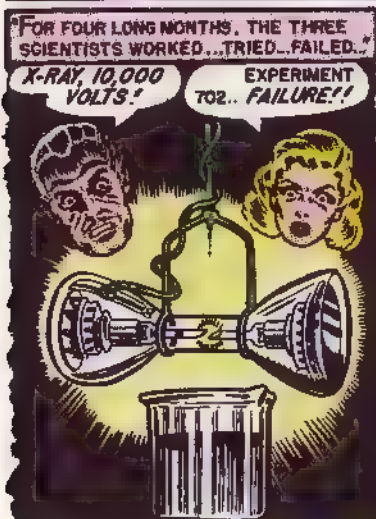
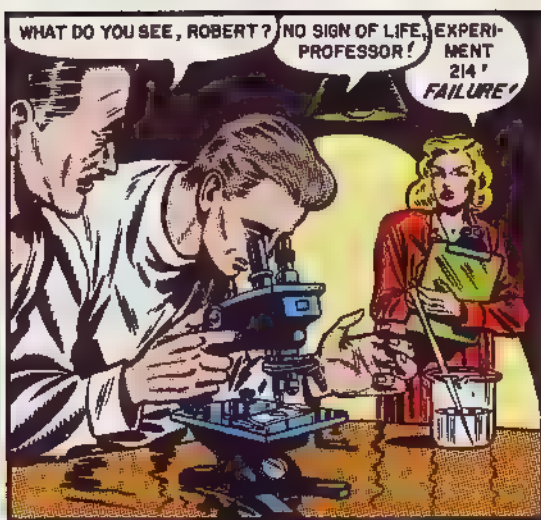
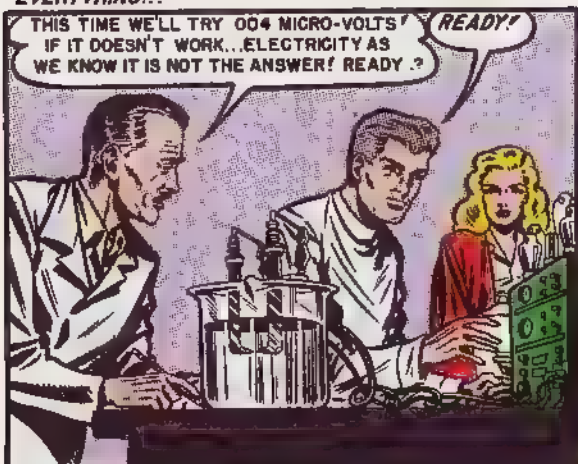


PERHAPS... ELECTRICITY, FATHER? PERHAPS IF WE *SHOCKED* THIS COMBINATION OF COMPOUNDS AND ELEMENTS... THE LIVING PROCESS WOULD *BEGIN*...

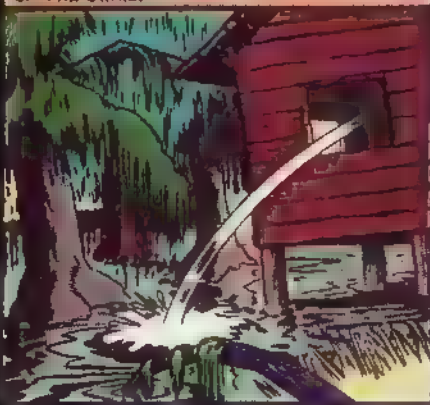
WE WILL TRY IT, MARIE! WE WILL TRY EVERYTHING! THE 'CONDITION' OR STIMULANT IS WHAT WE *MUST* DISCOVER...



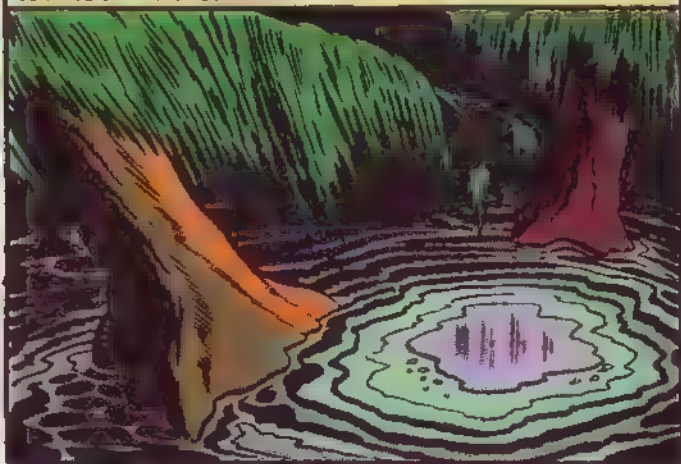
"IN THE DAYS AND WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED...THEY TRIED EVERYTHING..."



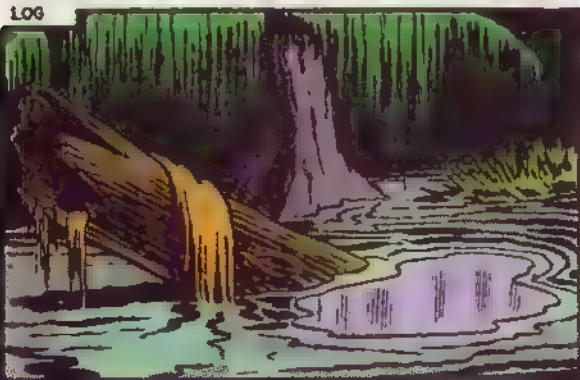
IN A FIT OF RAGE, PROFESSOR WARD HAD FLUNG THE BEAKER CONTAINING THEIR PRECIOUS COMBINATIONS OF CHEMICALS THROUGH THE WINDOW INTO THE STAGNANT, MURKY WATERS OF THE SWAMP



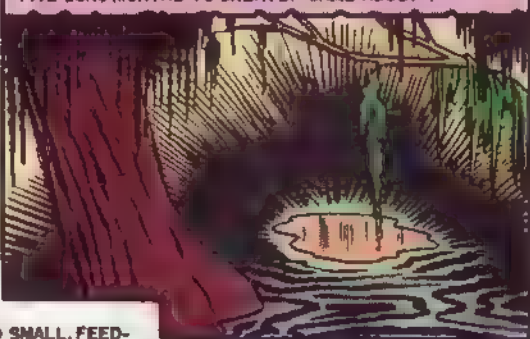
SLOWLY THE BEAKER SANK AND THE MIXTURE SPREAD OVER THE SURFACE OF THE STILL WATER



LAZILY.. IT DRIFTED ALONG.. COMING TO REST NEAR A ROTTED LOG



"AND THEN.. *IT HAPPENED!*" THERE, IN THE DARK, DARK WATERS OF THE SWAMP IN THE HEAT AND THE STENCH AND THE DAMPNESS.. *IT HAPPENED!* UNKNOWN UNEX-PLAINED.. THE CONDITION THAT *THEY* HAD TRIED FOR FIVE LONG MONTHS TO CREATE.. CAME ABOUT..



IT LIVED! THE SMALL MIXTURE OF CHEMICALS AND BASIC ELEMENTS BEGAN TO *LIVE!* A SIMPLE FORM OF LIFE... WITH NO STRUCTURE! JUST A SHAPELESS, AMOEBA-LIKE MASS OF LIVING PROTOPLASM!



"AT FIRST, IT REMAINED SMALL, FEEDING ON MICROSCOPIC ORGANISMS! BUT THEN, AS IT GREW LARGER AND LARGER.. IT SEEKED LARGER FOOD.. SMALL FISH.. INSECTS! IT ENVELOPED THEM.. AS AN AMOEBA DOES.. SECRETING DIGESTIVE JUICES THAT DISSOLVE THE VICTIMS INTO A FORM MORE EASILY *ABSORBED*..



"AND STILL IT GREW, UNCONTROLLED... BIGGER... BIGGER! IT MOVED ABOUT NOW.. OUT OF THE WATER ONTO THE LAND.. ENVELOPING AND ABSORBING EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH..."



"MEANWHILE, PROFESSOR WARD AND HIS DAUGHTER HAD MET WITH A NEW PROBLEM! ROBERT GOLBY!"

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, GOLBY?

EXACTLY WHAT I MEAN! I'M QUITTING THIS... THIS THING WE'RE TRYING TO DO...! IT'S... IT'S **WRONG!**



A SCIENTIST... TALKING LIKE THAT? WHAT'S COME OVER YOU, GOLBY?

I... I DON'T KNOW! ONLY I'M GETTING OUT... BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.



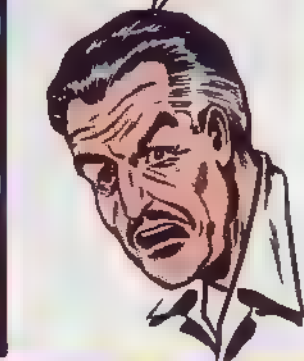
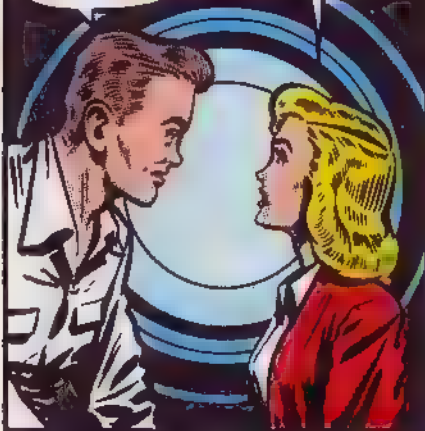
ARE YOU COMING WITH ME, MARIE?

BUT... BUT... BOB!

YOU SEE, MARIE! HE'S TURNED OUT TO BE A SNIVELING COWARD! GO ON... GOLBY... GET OUT! A TRUE SCIENTIST IS **NEVER** AFRAID... OF ANYTHING!

ARE YOU COMING, MARIE?

MY PLACE IS HERE, ROBERT... WITH MY FATHER... AND OUR WORK! YOU'D BETTER GO...



GOLBY TURNED AND LEFT! HE CROSSED THE RICKETY WALK FROM THE HOUSE OVER THE SWAMP TO THE BANK! SUDDENLY HE HEARD A TERRIFIED SCREAM...

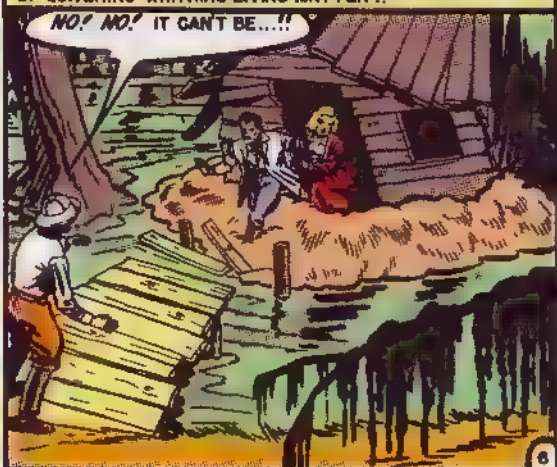
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEK!

WHAT THE ?



WHAT HE SAW MADE HIS BLOOD FREEZE... HIS HAIR STAND ON END! THE LABORATORY WAS COLLAPSING INTO A MASS OF QUIVERING WRITHING LIVING MATTER...

NO! NO! IT CAN'T BE...!!



PROFESSOR WARD AND MARIE... BOTH SCREAMING HYSTERICALLY, WERE BEING SUCKED INTO THAT HUGE BLOB OF LIVING MATTER! HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING, COLBY STOOD, TERRIFIED...WATCHING IT ALL...



...AS A FINAL MUFFLED GUY ECHOED THROUGH THE SILENT SWAMP...AND THE GLAWING, CLUTCHING HAND OF PROFESSOR WARD DISAPPEARED INTO THE RIPPLING MASS!



SO YOU SEE GENTLEMEN, THAT IS WHAT AWAITS YOU IN THE DEEP DARK DEPTHS OF THE OKEFENOKEE! THE LIFE THAT THEY HAD HELPED TO CREATE, AND THAT HAD DESTROYED PROFESSOR WARD AND HIS DAUGHTER, WAITS TO DESTROY YOU



THAT'S QUITE A YARN, OLD TIMER, BUT IF YOU DON'T MIND, I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE...

YEAH! LET'S GO SAM!



REMEMBER, GENTLEMEN, I WARNED YOU! YOU SEE...MY NAME IS ROBERT COLBY!

SURE, OLD MAN... SURE!



THE TWO MEN PUSH THEIR FLATBOTTOM BOAT OUT INTO THE STREAM...THEIR LAUGHTER DRIFTING ACROSS THE STAGNANT SILENT WATER! SLOWLY, THEY MAKE THEIR WAY UPSTREAM! SUDDENLY...

COLBY! HE SAID HIS NAME WAS COLBY! THAT WAS THE NAME OF THE YOUNG SCIENTIST THAT ESCAPED...THE...THE... SAM!! LOOK!!

WHY...? WHY NO. NO... NO! IT'S... IT'S...THE... THING...



...AND THAT'S MY TALE FROM THE CAULDRON FOR THIS ISSUE! THE TWO MEN REFUSED TO SWALLOW OLD COLBY'S STORY. AND SO. HEH, HEH. THEY GOT SWALLOWED UP INSTEAD SEE YOU NEXT ISSUE! BYE, NOW!



THIS IS THE STORY OF A STRANGE CLUB*... AND A STILL STRANGER INITIATION! I CALL THIS TALE... A

REPORT FROM THE GRAVE



*THIS CLUB WAS NAMED AFTER ME, ALTHOUGH I *DID NOT* AND *DO NOT NOW* SANCTION ITS STRANGE POLICIES! V K.

MY STORY BEGINS ON A DARK NIGHT, AT THE HOME OF FRED COOMBS, THE TOWN UNDERTAKER...

GENTLEMEN! AS *PRESIDENT OF THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CLUB*, I HEREBY CALL THIS MEETING TO ORDER! AS YOU ALL KNOW, WE ARE GATHERED HERE TO INITIATE A *NEW* MEMBER INTO OUR HORROR CLUB TO *REPLACE* POOR OLD WILLY BALM, WHO *DIED SUDDENLY* LAST MONTH...



THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HAS DECIDED UPON A SUITABLE INITIATION! OUR PROSPECTIVE MEMBER... *MR. WARREN LAKE*... WILL, AT THE STROKE OF MID-NIGHT, ENTER FAIRHAVEN CEMETERY AND PROCEED TO *EXHUME THE BODY* OF OUR LATE DEPARTED MEMBER!

WHAT?



PLEASE DO NOT INTERRUPT UNTIL I HAVE FINISHED! UPON UNEARTHING THE BODY, THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER WILL NOTE THE *TIME* UPON THE DEAD MEMBER'S WATCH! HE WILL THEN REPORT BACK *HERE* TO US! *J.*, HAVING SET UP POOR WILLY'S FUNERAL, WILL KNOW IF MR LAKE HAS FULFILLED HIS MISSION!



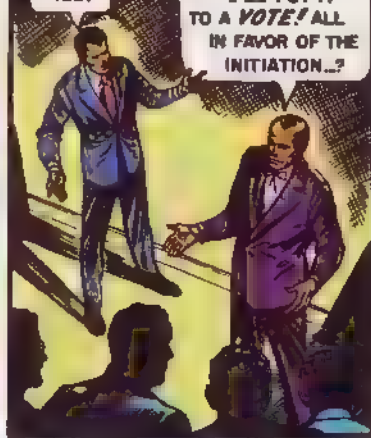
NO! I'M AGAINST IT! THE WHOLE IDEA IS *REVOLTING!* IT IS NOT THE *PURPOSE* OF THIS CLUB TO SUBJECT PEOPLE TO SUCH A HORRIBLE ORDEAL!



LISTEN TO **VARDY!** SINCE WHEN DID YOU GET SO HIGH AND MIGHTY, VARD?

I JUST DON'T THINK IT'S *RIGHT*, THAT'S ALL!

ALL RIGHT, GENTLEMEN! I'LL PUT IT TO A *VOTE!* ALL IN FAVOR OF THE INITIATION...?



ALL HANDS BUT ONE GO UP!

SORRY, VARD? YOU'RE OUTNUMBERED! THE INITIATION STANDS! YOU'LL FIND A *SPADE* IN MY GARAGE, MR. LAKE!

DON'T BE TOO NERVOUS, LAKE! AFTER ALL... WHAT HARM CAN A *STIFF* DO?



THE PROSPECTIVE MEMBER OF THE *VAULT-KEEPER'S CLUB* TURNS AND LEAVES THE ASSEMBLAGE, HORROR AND TERROR ON HIS PALED FACE...

HAW-HAW!

TAKE IT EASY, WARREN!

GIVE MY *REGARDS* TO OL' WILLY!

≡GULP≡



AS THE LAST STROKE OF TWELVE DIES AWAY, THE *MYSTIC GATE OF FAIRHAVEN CEMETERY SQUARE* OPENS...

THERE'S...*REALLY* NO REASON...TO BE...*FRIGHTENED!* I...I WONDER IF JOINING THE CLUB IS...*WORTH ALL*...≡GULP≡ THIS?



WARREN LAKE...PROSPECTIVE MEMBER OF THE *VAULT-KEEPER'S CLUB*...MAKES HIS WAY SLOWLY OVER THE SOFT, SILENT EARTH AND STOPS BEFORE A RATHER NEW-LOOKING HEADSTONE...

THIS IS IT! WILLIAM BALM, BORN...JULY 9TH, 1922...DIED...JULY 2, 1950! WELL, I MIGHT AS WELL *BEGIN*...



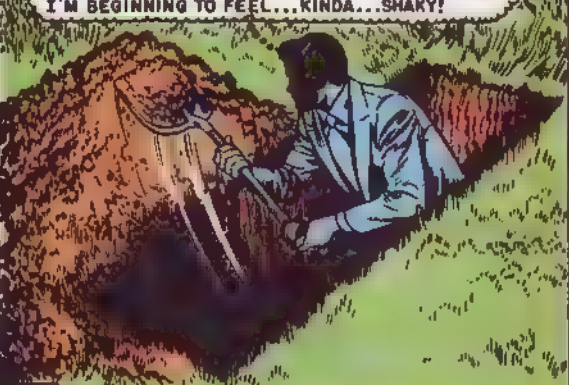
THE THICK SILENCE THAT HANGS OVER THE GRAVEYARD LIKE A BLACK SHROUD IS NOW SHATTERED BY THE SOUND OF WARREN LAKE'S DIGGING...

THE EARTH IS STILL *SOFT*... AFTER ONLY A MONTH...



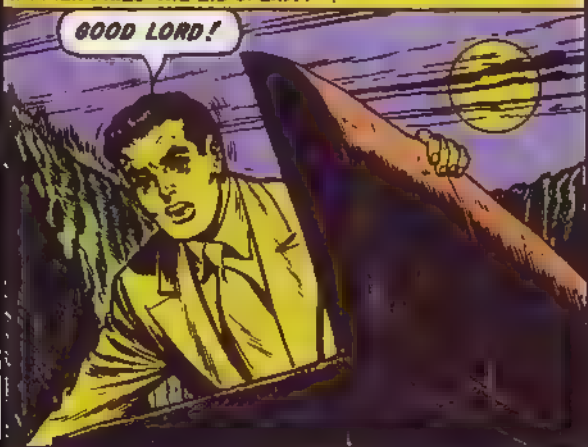
AN HOUR PASSES! THEN TWO! SUDDENLY THE HOLLOW BOOM OF SPADE STRIKING COFFIN ECHOES FROM GRAVESTONE TO GRAVESTONE...

NOT MUCH MORE TO *GO*... THANK GOODNESS, TOO! I'M BEGINNING TO FEEL... KINDA... SHAKY!



THE DIRT IS CLEARED FROM THE TOP OF THE COFFIN, AND WARREN PRIES THE LID OPEN...

GOOD LORD!



QUICKLY WARREN SCAMPERS FROM THE YAWNING BLACK CAVERN HE HAS DUG, AND BREATHLESSLY BEGINS TO SHOVEL THE DIRT BACK INTO THE BATTERED CASKET...

HMMPH! SOME... PRACTICAL... JOKE... NO DOUBT!



AT ABOUT THREE A.M., WARREN LAKE AGAIN ENTERS THE HOME OF FRED COOMBS...

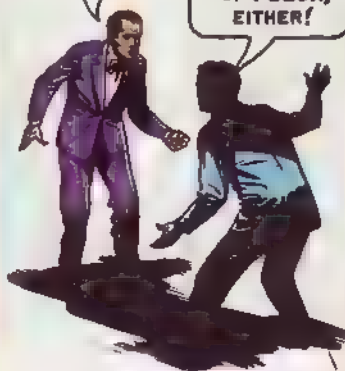
WELL, MR. LAKE? DID YOU NOTE THE TIME...

HUH! SOME BIG JOKE YOU GUYS PULLED! OKAY... SO I'M LAUGHING!



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? JUST TELL US THE TIME ON POOR WILLY'S WATCH AND YOU'LL...

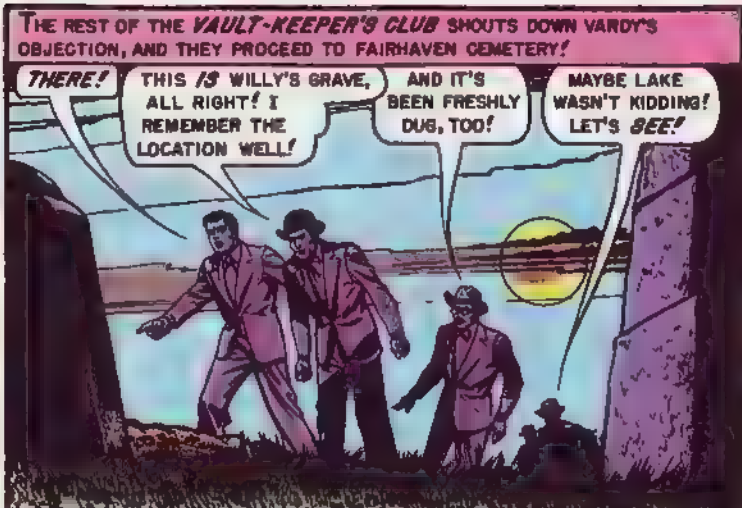
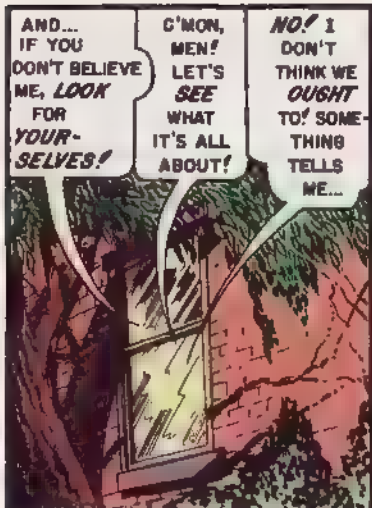
AW, CUT IT OUT, FRED! THAT CORPSE DIDN'T HAVE A WATCH... OR A DROP OF FLESH, EITHER!



WHAT?

YOU HEARD ME! THERE WAS NOTHING BUT A BUNCH OF RAGS AND BONES IN THAT COFFIN! LOOKS LIKE SOMEBODY'S MOVED THE TOMBSTONE!





**NO! NO!
I DIDN'T...**

**HE WAS TAKING
OUT YOUR
GIRL...**

**SHE
BROKE
HER
ENGAGE-
MENT
WITH
YOU...**



**YOU WERE
ANGRY...**

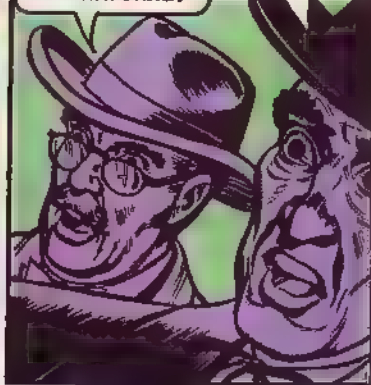
**NO...
NO...**

**YOU
POISONED
HIM...**



**AND... I NEVER
QUESTIONED
THAT HIS DEATH
WAS ANYTHING
BUT NATURAL!**

**THAT'S ALL
RIGHT, DOG!
WE ALL THOUGHT
SO...**



**TALK, YARDY!
TELL US!**

**TELL US OR
WE'LL...WE'LL....**

YOU'LL WHAT!



**YOU HAVEN'T ANYTHING ON ME! YOU
CAN'T PROVE A THING! GO AHEAD!
FIND WILLY'S BODY! GO AHEAD!
THERE'S THE CEMETERY! GO DIG
UP ALL THE GRAVES...HAW...
HAW...**

**WHY, YOU
DIRTY
MURDERING...**

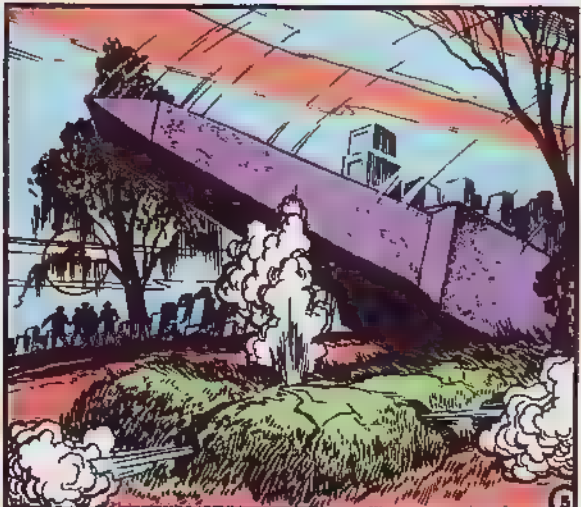
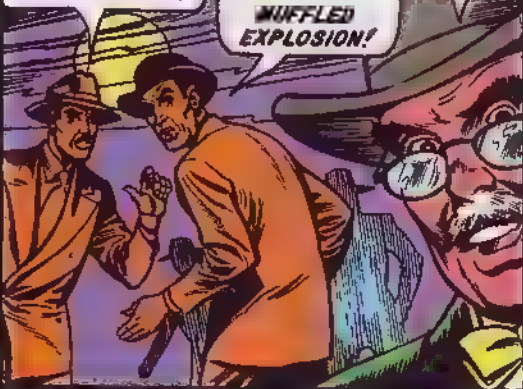


**SUDDENLY, FROM FAR ACROSS THE TOMBSTONES,
COMES A DULL REPORT... A THUD... AS IF FROM
BELOW THE GROUND...**

WHAT WAS THAT?

**SOUNDED
LIKE A
MUFFLED
EXPLOSION!**

LOOK!



GOOD LORD!
THAT HEAD-
STONE
TOPPLED
OVER...

AND THE
GRAVE'S
CRACKED
OPEN...

NO!
NO!



SOMEBODY GRAB VARDY!
THE REST OF YOU COME
WITH ME! I THINK I
KNOW WHAT THAT WAS!



OKAY,
VARDY!
DON'T
TRY
ANY-
THING!

GENTLEMEN! I STRONGLY SUSPECT
THAT UNDER THIS CRACKED GRAVE,
WE WILL FIND THE BODY OF **WILLIE
BALM**...WHERE VARDY HID IT...



THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CLUB SETS TO WORK DIGGING
AGAIN....

LOOK AT THIS! THE
CASKET'S SPLINTERED!

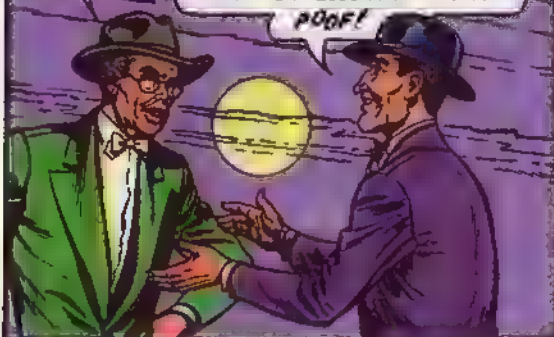
SOMEBODY CALL THE
POLICE! I'M GOING
TO REQUEST AN
AUTOPSY!



BY THE WAY,
FRED, JUST
HOW DID
THAT
EXPLOSION
HAPPEN?

SIMPLE! I MUST ADMIT IT'S ALL MY
FAULT! IN MY TWELVE YEARS OF
UNDERTAKING, I NEVER BEFORE
MADE SUCH A MISTAKE! I NEGLECTED
TO DRILL HOLES IN THE CASKET
TO ALLOW THE GASES FROM THE
DECOMPOSING BODY TO ESCAPE!
WHEN THE PRESSURE BUILT UP...

POOF!



THERE'S NO NEED, GENTLEMEN!
I CONFESS! I POISONED
HIM! I HATED HIM! HE STOLE
MY GIRL! AND IF YOU HADN'T
THOUGHT OF THIS STUPID
INITIATION, I WOULD HAVE
GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT!

WILLY WAS VERY
HELPFUL IN
TELLING US
WHERE HE WAS
BURIED! IT WOULD
HAVE BEEN AWFUL
TO HAVE HAD TO DIG
UP THE WHOLE
GEMETERY TO
FIND HIM!



SEEMS LIKE **LAKE**, HERE,
OUGHT TO BE ALLOWED TO
JOIN THE CLUB ANYWAY,
FRED...EVEN THOUGH HE
DIDN'T ACTUALLY
FULFILL HIS MISSION!

GEE! NOW WE'LL HAVE
ANOTHER VACANCY
TO FILL WHEN THEY
EXECUTE VARDY!
SAY...PERHAPS YOU'D
LIKE TO APPLY!



COME NOW, TO A CARNIVAL...TRAVELING FROM TOWN TO TOWN... AND I WILL SHOW YOU AN INTERESTING EXHIBIT CALLED...

BURIED ALIVE!



ANOTHER SUSPENSE STORY
from THE VAULT OF
HORROR!

IT IS A SEEDY, TWO-BIT CARNIVAL WITH THE USUAL
FREAKS AND NOVELTIES...

STEP RIGHT UP, LADIES AND GENTLE-
MEN! SEE ZOBO... THE LIVING CORPSE!
ZOBO... WHO STAYS UNDER SIX FEET
OF EARTH... **BURIED ALIVE**...
FOR EIGHT HOURS...

LOOK AT HIM,
DOWN THERE!
IT'S AMAZING!

SAH! IT'S
A PHONEY!

THEY PUMP
AIR
TO 'IM!



AFTER THE CROWDS HAVE GONE AND THE MIDWAY
IS DESERTED...

OKAY, SAM! THE JOINT'S
CLOSED! I'LL DIS YOU
OUT, NOW!

HURRY UP, RITA! I'M
HUNGRY! AND I'VE
JUST ABOUT USED UP
ALL THE OXYGEN...



**RITA SPADES AWAY THE LOOSE
DIRT OVER THE GREAT ZOBO...**

WHEW! BOY, IT WAS
HOT DOWN THERE
TODAY! MADE IT
TOUGH ON MY
"SHALLOW-
BREATHING"!



TAKE IT EASY,
SAM! I'LL BE
SEEING YOU!

**WHERE YOU
GOIN', RITA?**



WHY...NOWHERE!...
I'M JUST GONNA
TAKE A WALK...
THAT'S ALL!

**RITA SAUNTERS AWAY UP THE
DARKENED MIDWAY...**

SEEMS TO ME SHE'S BEEN WALKIN'
A LOT LATELY! I'LL FOLLOW
HER TONIGHT...



SAM...THE GREAT ZOBO...TAILS RITA TO THE HIGHWAY...

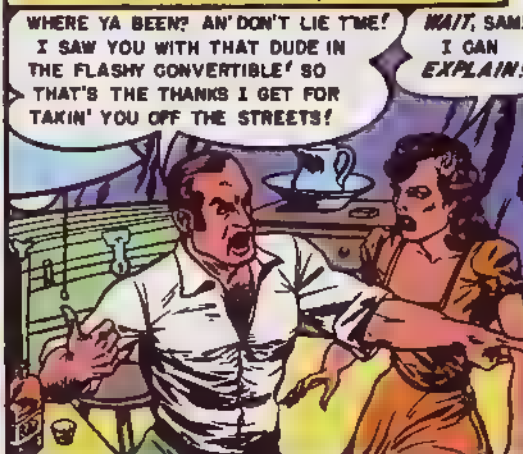


HOP IN, RITA!
YOU LOOK
GOOD TONIGHT!

I FEEL GOOD,
PAUL! LET'S GO
SOMEPLACE AND
DANCE!

SO...THAT'S THE
SCORE! THAT NO-
GOOD DAME...SHE'S
TWO-TIMING ME!

**ENRAGED, SAM RETURNS TO HIS TENT...AND WAITS!
ABOUT THREE IN THE MORNING, RITA COMES IN...**



WHERE YA BEEN? AN' DON'T LIE T'ME!
I SAW YOU WITH THAT DUDE IN
THE FLASHY CONVERTIBLE! SO
THAT'S THE THANKS I GET FOR
TAKIN' YOU OFF THE STREETS!

WAIT, SAM!
I CAN
EXPLAIN!



ALL RIGHT! GO 'HEAD!
TALK YOUR WAY OUT
OF THIS... IF YOU
CAN!

I'M DOIN' IT FOR US SAM...
YOU AN' ME! I GOT A PLAN...
AND WHEN WE'RE THROUGH,
OUR GARNY DAYS'LL BE
OVER! WE CAN GET MARRIED
LIKE YOU WANT!



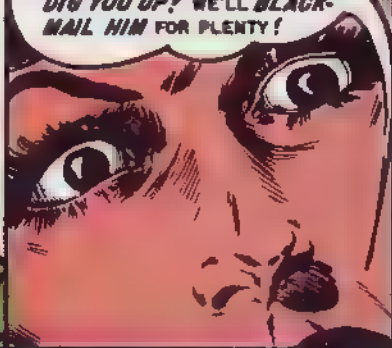
MAKE IT GOOD,
RITA, OR
S'HELP ME,
I'LL...

LISTEN, WILL YOU? I GOT THIS GUY ON
A STRING! I TOLD HIM YOU AN' ME
WERE MARRIED BUT THAT I'M TIRED
OF YOU! HE'S RICH, SAM! HE CAN BE
TAKEN FOR PLENTY! HERE'S MY
PLAN...

SUSPICIOUSLY,
SAM LISTENS
AS RITA UN-
FOLDS HER
DIABOLICAL
SCHEME...



AN' THEN *YOU* BUST IN... AND WHEN
HE SLUGS YOU, YOU FLOP AND START
THAT *SHALLOW-BREATHING* OF
YOURS! HE'LL THINK HE *KILLED*
YOU... AN' THEN I'LL GET HIM TO
BURY YOU! LATER, I'LL COME
DIG YOU UP! WE'LL *BLACK-
MAIL* HIM FOR PLENTY!



HE'LL THINK YOU'RE DEAD
AND HE'LL *PAY OFF* TO
SAVE HIMSELF FROM
SCANDAL! HOW'S IT
SOUND?

SOUNDS OKAY, RITA!
ONLY YOU GOTTA GET
ME OUT IN *LESS* THAN
AN HOUR! I CAN'T LAST
MORE THAN *FIFTY-
FIVE MINUTES...*



...IT WON'T BE LIKE THE *SHOW!*
I WON'T *HAVE* A COFFIN...
I'LL BE IN DIRT AND I CAN
ONLY LAST *FIFTY-FIVE MINUTES*
WITH THE *AIR IN MY LUNGS!*

DON'T WORRY, SAM! I'LL
GET YOU OUT IN TIME!
THEN *YOU* AN' *ME...*
WE'LL BE ON *EASY*
STREET!



THE NEXT NIGHT, WHEN RITA'S SCHEME IS TO TAKE PLACE...

HOP IN, RITA! I LET THE
SERVANTS OFF TONIGHT!
HOW ABOUT COMING TO *MY*
PLACE?

WHY THAT'LL BE
REAL *NICE...* PAUL!
NICE AND *GOZY!*



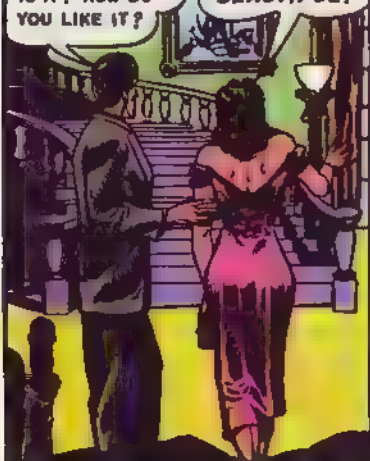
PAUL DRIVES RITA TO HIS PALATIAL
ESTATE...

WELL, RITA! THIS
IS IT! HOW DO
YOU LIKE IT?

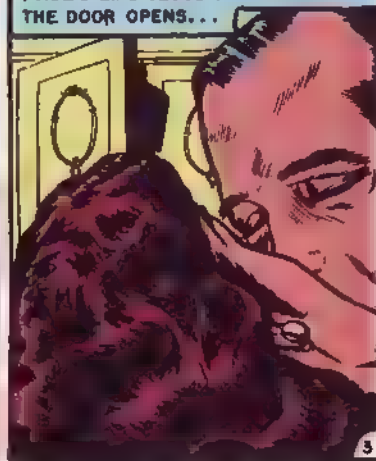
IT'S BEAUTIFUL,
PAUL... JUST
BEAUTIFUL!

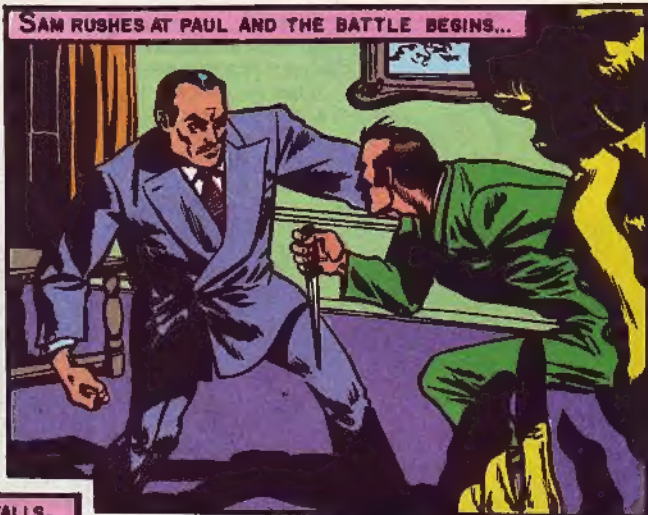
SO ARE *YOU*, RITA!
I'VE *DREAMED*
ABOUT THIS
MOMENT...

PAUL...
LET ME
GO...



PAUL'S LIPS CLOSE ON RITA'S AS
THE DOOR OPENS...





AS THE LAST SHOVEL-FULL OF EARTH IS PATTED DOWN, A SHADOWY FIGURE PEERS FROM BEHIND THE BUSHES...

SO *THAT'S* WHY HE LET US GO FOR THE NIGHT! HE'S WITH A *WOMAN*!

ALL RIGHT, RITA! IT'S *DONE*! LET'S GO!

AND UNDER SEVERAL FEET OF EARTH, LIES SAM... THE GREAT *ZORO*...

IT'S ALMOST AS IF I WERE DOIN' THE *AOT*... ONLY I'M NOT IN THE "BOX"...

MEANWHILE, THE SHADOWY FIGURE HAS FOLLOWED PAUL AND RITA BACK TO THE HOUSE...

NO ONE WILL EVER FIND HIM OUT THERE, PAUL! YOU'RE SAFE!

HIM? THEY MUSTA *BURIED* SOMEBODY BACK THERE!

AND BACK IN HIS CRUDE GRAVE...

IT'S TIME... AND SHE ISN'T HERE! SHE... SHE NEVER *INTENDED* TO DIG ME UP! SHE... SHE *PLANNED* TO LET ME DIE! SHE *PLANNED* IT THIS WAY! RITA! RITA!

SUDDENLY THE STILLNESS ABOVE SAM IS SHATTERED BY THE SOUND OF A SPADE... STRIKING THE SOFT EARTH.

HE'S *RICH* ENOUGH! I COULD GO AWAY! HE'LL PAY *WELL*! I'VE *BOT* SOMETHING ON HIM NOW! I'M GOING TO *SEE* WHO IT IS HE KILLED!

SAM, NOW NEAR UNCONSCIOUSNESS FROM LACK OF AIR, TRIES DESPERATELY TO HOLD ON...

HURRY...HURRY!
I'M...GOING...
EVERYTHING...
BLACK...



THEN...WITH ONE LAST EFFORT, HE PUSHES HIMSELF THROUGH THE DIRT REMAINING OVER HIM...

TH...THANKS,
CHUM!

Y-A-A-A-A-A-H!



THE FRIGHTENED SERVANT...SCREAMING HYSTERICALLY...SCURRIES AWAY INTO THE NIGHT...

NO...NO...
Y-A-A-A-H!

POOR SAP! HE
THOUGHT I'D BE
A CORPSE! HAH!
AND SO DOES
RITA...



BACK AT HIS TENT AT THE CARNIVAL, SAM WAITS FOR RITA...

DOUBLE-CROSSIN'
WENCH! I'LL...KILL HER
OH-OH! HERE SHE
COMES...

SAM!



YOU THOUGHT I WAS DEAD,
HUH, RITA? YOU THOUGHT
YOU HAD IT ALL PLANNED?

NO, SAM, NO! I...
I COULDN'T GET
AWAY FROM HIM! HE
JUST BROUGHT ME
BACK! I WAS COMIN'
IN FOR A SHOVEL...
NOW!



OH, SAM! I THOUGHT I
WAS TOO LATE! BUT...
NOW WE'RE OKAY! HE...
HE'S SCARED STIFF!
HE'LL PAY PLENTY!

G'MON, RITA!
WE GOTTA PACK
OUR STUFF! THE
SHOW'S MOVIN'
TONIGHT! HELP ME
GET THE "BOX"
IN THE STATION
WAGON...



THE "BOX" IS SAM'S COFFIN, WHERE HE SPENDS EIGHT HOURS EVERY DAY...BURIED ALIVE! FOR TEN CENTS, YOU CAN LOOK DOWN A GLASS TUBE AND SEE HIM IN IT!

OKAY, SAM!
EVERYTHING'S
STOWED!

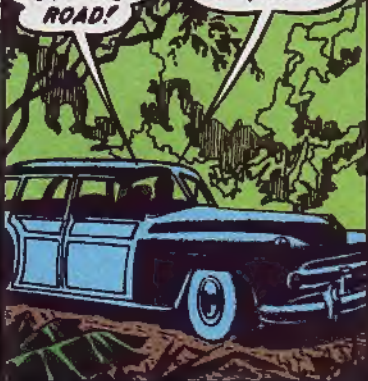
GET IN, RITA! LET'S
GET GOIN'!



FOR AN HOUR THEY DRIVE! AND THEN SAM TURNS OFF THE HIGHWAY INTO A DARK, DANK, SWAMPY AREA...

SAM! THIS ISN'T THE ROAD!

IT IS FOR YOU, MONEY!



THE LAST ROAD! YOU THOUGHT YOU'D LET ME DIE... EH! WELL... WE'LL SEE HOW YOU LIKE BEING BURIED ALIVE!

SAM! LET ME GO! LET... ME... GO...



FORGING RITA INTO THE "BOX", SAM NAILS THE LID SHUT...

I LAY IN THERE EVERY DAY, RITA! EVERY DAY WHILE YOU PLANNED TO GET RID OF ME...

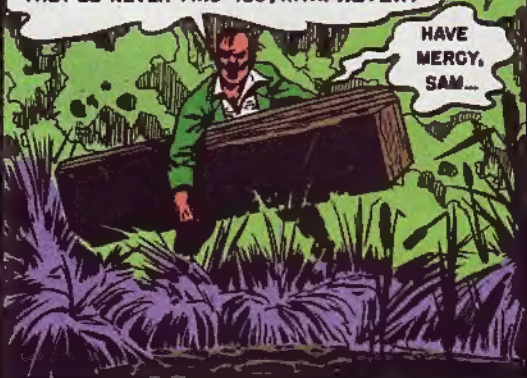
NO, SAM! NO...



SAM PICKS UP THE BOX AND CARRIES IT TO THE EDGE OF A STRANGE-LOOKING POOL...

NOW YOU'RE GONNA DIE IN THERE, RITA! I'M GONNA DROP YOU INTO THIS QUICKSAND! THEY'LL NEVER FIND YOU, RITA! NEVER!

HAVE MERCY, SAM...



SAM STANDS ON THE EDGE AND DROPS THE COFFIN INTO THE SEATHING SAND...

GOOD-BYE, RITA! GOOD... YAAAAHHHH!

NO! NO...



AS THE COFFIN, HEAVY WITH RITA'S STRUGGLING BODY, PLUNGES INTO THE PUTRID, STENCH-FILLED BOG... SAM FOLLOWS...

MY COAT... I NAILED UP MY COAT!



THE HEAVY "BOX" QUICKLY DISAPPEARS BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE QUICKSAND... AND SOON AFTER...

RITA... HELP ME... I... I... COUGH... CHOKE... GLUGG... MMMMPH...



...SAM AND RITA ARE BURIED ALIVE... FOR THE LAST TIME...